

April 30 Days
14

DAY OF DAYS

By LOUIS JOSEPH VANCE

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"But there was a burglar," P. Sylarite contended brightly. "You saw him yourself."

"No."

"But—but you did see him—later on the stairs."

Smiling, the woman shook her head. "I saw no burglar, merely a dear friend. In short, if it interests you to know, I saw my husband."

"Madam?" P. Sylarite sat up, with a shocked expression.

"Oh," said the woman lightly, "we're

good enough for one another—he and I. He deserved what he got when he married me. But that's not saying I'm content to see him duck what's coming to him for tonight's doings. In fact, I mean to get him before he gets me. Are you game to lend me a hand?"

"Really—I'd rather be excused."

"Really," she mocked pleasantly, "you won't be. I'm a gentle creature, but determined. Perhaps you've heard of me—Mrs. Jefferson Inche?"

"Indeed he had, and so had nine-tenths of New York's newspaper reading population heard of the most dangerous woman in town."

"But—ab—Mr. Inche, I understand, died some years ago."

"So he did."

"Yet you speak of your husband?"

"Of my present husband, whose name I don't want for reasons of real estate. I took the better when he was rich and will be richer when he dies. If our marriage comes out pretentively he'll be disinherited, so we've agreed to a sub rosa arrangement, which leaves him ostensibly a marketable bachelor."

"Now, I happen to know a marriage has recently been offered him, through which he would immediately come into control of a big pot of money, and naturally he's strong for it. But I refused his offer of a cool \$500,000 to play the Reno circuit, and so he concluded to sue for a divorce with a revolver, a Maxim silencer and a perfect alibi. Do you follow me?"

"As far as the alibi."

"Oh, that's quite simple! We don't live together, and he's in sure enough society, and I'm not. Tonight the annual Hadley-Owen post-Lenten mas-

querade's in full swing just around the corner, and Friend Husband's there with the rest of the haughty bunch. Can't you see how easy it would be for him to drop round here between dances, murder his awful wedded wife and hunt it back without his absence being noticed? But I recognized him. I saw his mouth—his mask wouldn't hide that—and knew him instantly."

P. Sylarite was silent. He, too, knew that mouth, its resource had something to do with Molly Leeding.

"Now that you know the lay of the land, how about helping me out?"

Now, the trail of the man with the twisted mouth promised fair to lead to Molly Leeding. P. Sylarite didn't linger on his decision.

"Short of trying a 'pretence hand at assassination'—"

"Don't be an ass! I only want to protect myself. Besides, you can't refuse. Consider how honest I've been with you. If I wanted to be nasty you'd be on your way now to a cell in the East Fifth-street station. But I was grateful."

"The salute he praised for that?"

"What's it for?"

"For waking me up in time to prevent my murder in my sleep," she returned readily, "and also for being the spunky little devil you are and chasing off that legend of a husband of mine. If it wasn't for you he'd 've got me sure, or else," she amended, "I'd 've got him, which would have been almost as unpleasant—what with being pinched and tried and having judges dangle and getting off at last only on the plea of insanity and all that. Who are you?"

"Michael Mountain, madam. This was the first unflattering combination to pay into his optimistic mind. 'You lost,' returned the lady severely. 'Come, what's your real name?'

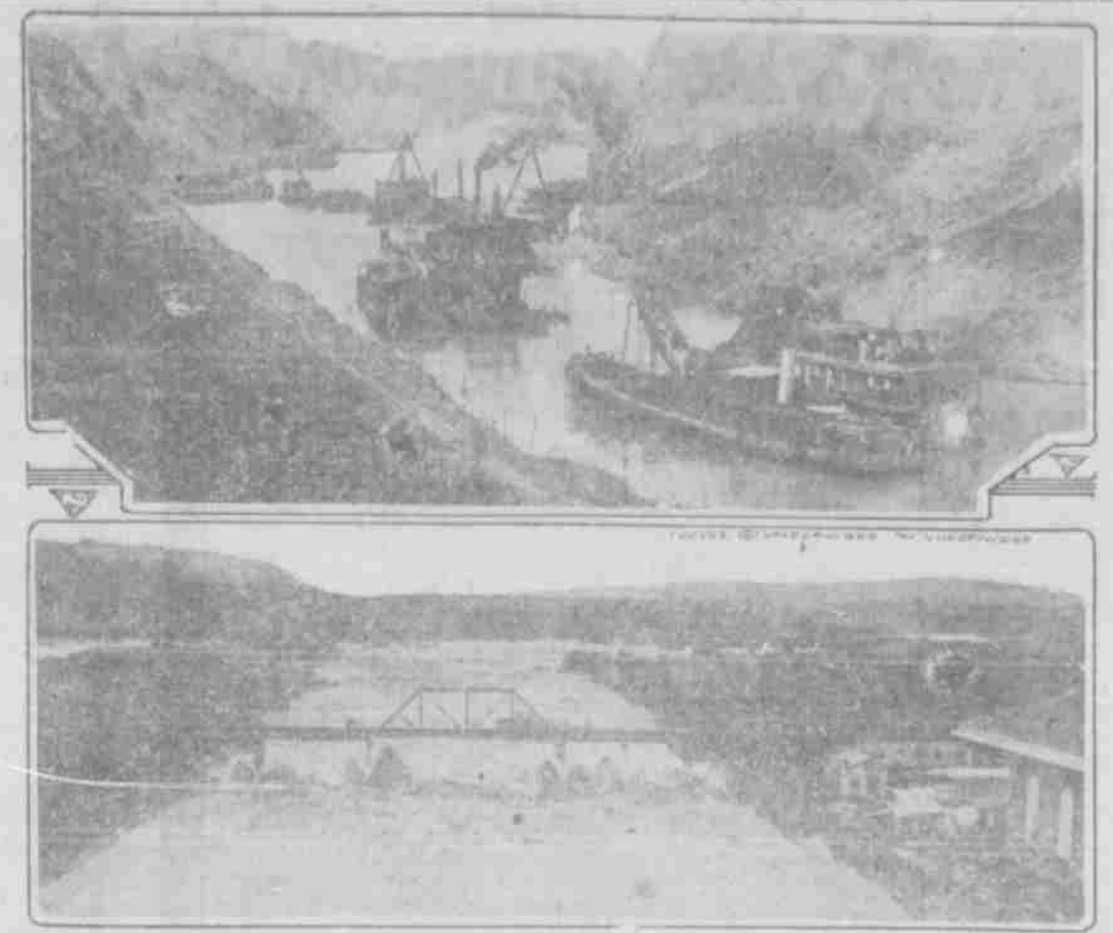
"Taking thought, he saw no great danger in being truthful for once.

"P. — unfortunately — Sylarite," he said, "bookkeeper for Whigham & Wimpers, leather merchants, Franklin street."

"And how did you come by that coat and hat?"

"Borrowed it from a drunken cop in Penfold's a little while ago. They

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Top, feet of dredges in Panama canal. Bottom, ships rushing through Gatun spillway.

were ridding the place, and I kind of wanted to get away. Strange to say, my disguise didn't take, and I had to leave by way of the back fence."

"I don't know why," said Mrs. Inche reflectively, "but I believe everything you say. Now, what'll you take to do me a service?"

"My services, madam, are yours to command. My reward—ah, your smile?"

"But," observed the lady elegantly, "how could a hundred look to you? Good, eh?"

"You misjudge me," the little man insisted. "Money is really no object."

"Still," she frowned in puzzlement, "I should think a clerk in the leather business—"

"I'm afraid I've misled you. I should have said that I was a clerk in the leather business until today. Now I happen to be independently wealthy, a clerk no longer."

"I think," announced the lady laughingly, "that you are one of the slickest young lads I ever listened to. On the other hand, you're unquestionably a perfect little gentleman. And, anyhow, I'm going to take you at your word and trust you. You're willing to go a bit out of your way to do me a favor tonight?"

"If he isn't in wait for him if you wait till daylight."

"Important as all that, eh?"

"It's life or death for me," said Mrs. Inche severely. "I've got to have protection. You've seen yourself how bad I need it. And the police are not for the likes of me. Besides," she added, with engaging candor, "if I succeed and

"Or any other night."

"Very well," Mrs. Inche rose. "Wait here a moment."

Wrapping her negligee round her, she swept magnificently out of the den, and a moment later again crossed P. Sylarite's range of vision as she ascended the stairs. Then she disappeared, and his reverie was presently interrupted by the sound of the woman's high, clear voice.

"Hello, Columbus, seven four hundred, please! Hello, Masani! Teeshah, please—Mrs. Jefferson Inche! Yes, change. Yes—immediately. Thank you!"

A moment later she reappeared on the stairs, carrying a wrap of some sort over her arm. When she again entered the den it proved to be a man's coat and soft hat that she had found for him.

"Put on," she ordered imperiously, "and change to those before you get plucked for impersonating an officer. Two o'clock is taxi for you, and this is what I want you to do—go to Dutch House. That's a dive, Fortieth street."

"I've heard of it," muttered P. Sylarite. "Any sober man who stays away from it is almost perfectly safe."

"I'll trust you to take care of yourself," said the lady. "Ask for Red November. You know who he is?"

"The gangster? Yes."

"If he isn't in wait for him if you wait till daylight."

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"Grab it from me, boss, when he wakes up he won't know where he's been."

The door closed, and Respectability was rudely jolted by P. Sylarite.

The ebony and gold cane of Respectability quivered in mid air.

"Put down that cane, Mr. Reim Kaynon," said P. Sylarite pleasantly, "unless you want me to take home with you in a way to let all New York know how you spend your wee wee hours."

With a snap grandly lowering his stick, Mr. Reim bent to peer into the face exposed in P. Sylarite's pushed back his hat, stared an instant, gawking, whined about and lunged heavily toward his taxi.

"The Bizarro!" whom he to the chauffeur, and dodging in banged the door.

TO BE CONTINUED.

There are 12,517 men engaged in work on the New York subway. And as of work, either in progress or completed, is \$125,414,056.

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When it came to second thought, alone in the gloom of an unsympathetic taxi, P. Sylarite inclined to concede himself more so than he was.

Dutch House, to which he was bound, bore the reputation of being a shifter a dive at ever stood back by

tell the truth then Friend Husband will be disinherited for sure, and I'll have had all my trouble for nothing."

"You make it perfectly clear, Mrs. Inche. And when I see Mr. Red November?"

"Say to him three words—'Nella wants you.' He'll understand. Then you can go home."

"If I get out alive."

"You're safe if you don't drink anything there."

"Doubtless, but I'll feel safer if you'll lend me the loan of this neat little toy," said P. Sylarite, weighing in one hand his automatic pistol.

"It's yours."

"Anything in it?"

"Three shots left, I believe. No matter. I'll get you a handful of cartridges, and you can reload the clip in the taxi—just that you're likely to need it."

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